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SUBJECT: CANDIDATE REGISTRATION ENDS; UDPS TO BOYCOTT
ELECTIONS

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11. (U) Summary: Candidate registration for the DRC's national presidential and legislative elections ended April 2, with the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) validating 32 dossiers for president. The CEI also received 8,650 applications for legislative candidates for the country's 500 National Assembly seats. Missing from the candidate lists, however, was the opposition party Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) and its leader Etienne Tshisekedi, who are boycotting the electoral process. The final candidate lists are expected to be published by April 19, with a revised electoral calendar (and perhaps a new date for elections) announced soon thereafter. End summary.

12. (U) The CEI announced April 5 a provisional list of 32 presidential candidates eligible to run in elections currently scheduled for June 18. After candidate registration closed April 2, the CEI had received 73 candidate dossiers. The Electoral Commission rejected 40 candidates for not having paid the USD 50,000 registration fee, while one other was rejected because the candidate had a criminal record (thereby making him ineligible under the DRC's electoral law). The Supreme Court will now review the provisional list and receive any challenges from political parties or individuals. The Court is expected to rule by April 14, and the CEI is expected to publish a final list of presidential candidates April 15.

13. (U) Absent from the presidential list is Etienne Tshisekedi, leader of the opposition UDPS. Despite numerous

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appeals (from Kofi Anna and DPKO's Jean-Marie Guehenno, among others) and despite last-minute attempts by MONUC officials to convince Tshisekedi to run, he refused to do so. UDPS spokesman Jean-Baptiste Bomanza said the UDPS will boycott elections alleging that the electoral process is not transparent. Bomanza also announced that the UDPS intends to "block" elections, albeit peacefully.

14. (U) The CEI announced April 4 that 8,650 people have registered to run for the 500 seats in the National Assembly. All 169 electoral districts have candidates running in them. As of the original March 23 deadline, several districts had not registered any candidates, prompting a 10-day extension of the registration period by the CEI (reftel). The CEI is examining the dossiers of the legislative candidates to verify all eligibility requirements have been met, including the payment of the USD 250 registration fee. CEI President Abbe Apollinaire Malu Malu said it is unlikely all registered candidates will be accepted (mainly for not paying the

registration fee), but did not estimate what that final number would be.

¶15. (U) Elections experts had been concerned that in the majority of multi-seat districts (approximately two-thirds of all districts) the number of registered candidates would be so large as to create unwieldy, multi-page ballots that might confuse voters. However, in only about 10-15 districts -- Kinshasa, Mbuji-Mayi and Lubumbashi -- does this now appear to be a potential problem. Most other electoral districts, based on the number of registered candidates, should be able to have ballots of only one or two pages, depending in the ultimate ballot design.

¶16. (U) In his April 4 press conference, Malu Malu said the CEI would publish a revised electoral calendar after final candidate lists are approved by the Supreme Court, which is expected by April 19. Malu Malu has signaled that because of the delays in the registration phase, the first round of elections could move past June 18.

¶17. (U) The 32 presidential candidates include a host of familiar names from the Congolese political arena. Current transitional government officials running include President Joseph Kabila (as an independent candidate, see reftel); Vice Presidents Jean-Pierre Bemba (Movement for the Liberation of Congo), Azarias Ruberwa (Congolese Rally for Democracy) and Z'ahidi Ngoma (Convention of the Camp of the Homeland); and Minister of Regional Cooperation Mbusa Nyamwisi (Forces for Revival). Other prominent candidates include: former minister Eugene Diomi (Christian Democracy); former Prime Minister Antoine Gizenga (Unified Lumumbist Party); former finance minister and central bank governor Pierre Pay Pay (Coalition of Congolese Democrats); Justine Kasavubu (Movement of Democrats), the daughter of former President Joseph Kasavubu;

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N'Zanga Mobutu (Union of Mobutuist Democrats), son of Mobutu Sese Seko; former rebel leader Roger Lumbala (Rally of Congolese Democrats and Nationalists); and Guy Patrice Lumumba (independent candidate), the youngest son of the former Prime Minister. (A report on presidential candidates will follow septel.)

¶18. (SBU) Comment: With candidate registration now complete, the real question remaining is when elections will actually be held. While the CEI has announced June 18 for the first round of presidential and legislative voting, the 10-day delay for candidate registration could well push that date back further. While Malu Malu and many others have stressed that the new constitution allows transitional institutions to remain in place until an elected government is installed, the announcement of an election date after June 30 could well provoke a strong negative reaction from a populace impatient to go to the polls. During an April 6 meeting, CIAT members all expressed concern about the announcement of a new election calendar that could slip first-round elections beyond June 30, as well as continuing uncertainties. All members felt the CEI should avoid specifying any new target dates until there is a high degree of certainty that the date(s) can be achieved, avoiding the necessity of multiple delay announcements. The CIAT is inviting Malu Malu to attend the CIAT's April 13 meeting to discuss the issue. End comment. MEECE